

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A clamshell package opener comprising:
means for gripping a die cut edge of the clamshell package;
a cutting device for engaging and puncturing the clamshell package in response to closing of said gripping means; and
means for advancing the die cut edge of the clamshell package after said cutting device has punctured the package.
2. The clamshell package opener according to claim 1, wherein said means for gripping comprises:
a first gear; and
a second gear mounted such that said first and second gears are closeable so as to engage the die cut edge of the clamshell package there between.
3. The clamshell package opener according to claim 2, wherein said first gear comprises an idler gear and said second gear comprises a driver gear.
4. The clamshell package opener according to claim 2, wherein said advancing means comprises a handle for rotating at least one of said first and said second gears.

5. The clamshell package opener according to claim 2, wherein said cutting device punctures an area adjacent said die cut edge when said idler gear and said driver gear are closed onto and engages said die cut edge.

6. A clamshell package opener comprising:

- a first arm having two opposing ends;
- a second arm pivotally connected to said first arm and having two opposing ends;
- a first gear rotatably mounted on one end of said first arm;
- a second gear rotatably mounted on one end of said second arm that is opposite said first gear, wherein pivotal closing movement of said first and second arms causes said first and second gears to move closer to each other and engage a die cut edge of the clamshell package disposed there between; and

a cutting device disposed on one of said arms adjacent one of said gears, said cutting device puncturing the clamshell package in an area adjacent the die cut edge when said arms are pivotally closed.

7. The clamshell package opener according to claim 6, further comprising driving means for advancing the die cut edge of the clamshell package through closed first and second gears.

8. The clamshell package opener according to claim 7, wherein said first gear comprises an idler gear and said second gear comprises a driver gear, said driving comprising said driver gear and means for rotating said driver gear.

9. The clamshell package opener according to claim 8, wherein said rotating means comprises a handle rotatably connected to said driver gear through said